



Retention Schedules

For Local Government Paper & Electronic Records



THE GEORGIA ARCHIVES

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Morrow, Georgia
The Georgia Archives
Records and Information Management Services
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Retention Schedules for Local Government Records

Introduction

This retention schedule includes records series created by local governments. The records fall into two categories: common and specific. *Common Record Categories* include records, such as budget and accounting records, which may be created by any local government agency. The retention period provided applies to the record, regardless of which agency created it. *Specific Record Categories* include records, such as parking tickets, which are created by a specific government agency and no other.

Common Record Categories are:

- Accounting
- Administration
- Administrative Support
- Audits
- Budgeting
- Information Technology
- Legal
- Payroll
- Personnel
- Property
- Records Management

Specific Record Categories are:

- Building
- Cemetery
- Courts—Municipal
- Education
- Elections
- Health Services
- Library/Archives/Museums
- Medical Examiner
- Planning and Zoning
- Public Safety
- Public Works
- Taxation
- Tourism and Recreation
- Transportation

General Guidelines

Certain guidelines apply to all records listed in this schedule:

- *These retention periods apply to all record formats.* The retention periods shown in this guideline apply to all records and information created by the local government, regardless of physical format (paper, film, electronic, etc.)
- *These retention periods are the minimum requirements.* Each retention period in this schedule is the minimum length of time the record must be retained. The decision to retain specific information longer than the minimum retention period should be made by local government administration and legal counsel. Such a decision should be documented in the records management plan and/or local ordinance.
- *These retention periods are intended to guide local governments.* Each local government must adopt a retention schedule (O.C.G.A. 50-18-99(d)). Records retention periods should be

established to serve the needs of the local government, but the retention period can never be less than the minimum retention periods indicated in this schedule.

- *These retention periods apply to records under normal business conditions.* The retention periods in this schedule apply to records created and used under normal business conditions. If a particular series of records is required for litigation, audit, or other special administrative needs, it must be retained for as long as needed.
- *Disposition requirements are stated in the following manner—from the creation of the record or following an event or occurrence.* For example, Accounts Receivable Files have a retention of retain 5 years (after creation) while Bank Loan Records are retained for 5 years after settlement of the loan (an event).

Statutory Basis

This schedule is issued by the Georgia Archives as part of its statutory requirement to “provide local governments with a list of common types of records maintained together with recommended retention periods” (O.C.G.A. 50-18-99(f))

For specific information about the statutory obligations of local governments, please refer to O.C.G.A. 50-18-99, below.

O.C.G.A. 50-18-99

(a) As used in this Code section, the term:

(1) "Governing body" means the governing body of any county, municipality, or consolidated government. The term includes school boards of this state.

(2) "Office or officer" means any county office or officer or any office or officer under the jurisdiction of a governing body which maintains or is responsible for records.

(b) This article shall apply to local governments, except as modified in this Code section.

(c) All records created or received in the performance of a public duty or paid for by public funds by a governing body are deemed to be public property and shall constitute a record of public acts.

(d) Prior to July 1, 1983, each office or officer shall recommend to the governing body a retention schedule. This schedule shall include an inventory of the type of records maintained and the length of time each type of record shall be maintained in the office or in a record-holding area. These retention periods shall be based on the legal, fiscal, administrative, and historical needs for the record. Schedules previously approved by the State Records Committee will remain in effect until changed by the governing body.

(e) Prior to January 1, 1984, each governing body shall approve by resolution or ordinance a records management plan which shall include but not be limited to:

(1) The name of the person or title of the officer who will coordinate and perform the responsibilities of the governing body under this article;

(2) Each retention schedule approved by the governing body; and

(3) Provisions for maintenance and security of the records.

(f) The Secretary of State, through the department, shall coordinate all records management matters for purposes of this Code section. The department shall provide local governments with a list of common types of records maintained together with recommended retention periods and shall provide training and assistance as required. The department shall advise local governments of records of historical value which may be deposited in the state archives. All other records shall be maintained by the local government.

(g) Except as otherwise provided by law, ordinance, or policy adopted by the office or officer responsible for maintaining the records, all records shall be open to the public or the state or any agency thereof.

What To Do About Records Not Covered By This Schedule

A local government may have unique or specialized records not addressed by this schedule. These must be addressed by retention schedules initiated by the local government itself. By statute, the following requirements for records schedules are established:

- O.C.G.A. § 50-18-99 (d) “. . .each office or officer shall recommend to the governing body a retention schedule. This schedule shall include an inventory of the type of records maintained and the length of time each type of record shall be maintained in the office or in a record-holding area. These retention periods shall be based on the legal, fiscal, administrative, and historical needs of the record. Schedules previously approved by the State Records Committee will remain in effect ***until changed by the governing body***”
- O.C.G.A. § 50-18-99 (e): Each governing body shall approve by resolution or ordinance a records management plan which shall include but not be limited to:
 - The title of the officer who will coordinate the records management program;
 - Each retention schedule approved by the governing body; and
 - Provisions for maintenance and security of the records.
- O.C.G.A. § 50-18-99 (f): The Secretary of State, through the Division of Archives and History, will provide local governments with a list of common types of records maintained in local offices together with recommended retention periods.

If you have such records:

1. Do not dispose of any public record except in accordance with a retention schedule **approved by the local governing body.**
2. At the local government's request, the Georgia Archives will review the proposed retention schedule and consider adding it to the Retention Guidelines.
3. Requests for retention review should be sent to the Records and Information Management Services (RIMS) office of the Georgia Archives, 5800 Jonesboro Road, Morrow, GA 30260-1101. The request should provide
 - a. a title for the records series;
 - b. a short description of the series; and
 - c. the recommended minimum retention.
4. Every two years, the Retention Guidelines will be reviewed and updated, adding new recommendations and revising others. The new edition will be distributed that year during workshops and conferences. The current edition will be available at all times at www.GeorgiaArchives.org.

Protecting Vital Records

Georgia Code O.C.G.A. 50-18-91 (10) defines "Vital records" as "any record vital to the resumption or continuation of operations, or both; to the re-creation of the legal and financial status of government in the state; or to the protection and fulfillment of obligations to citizens of the state." Records series identified as Vital in this schedule contain information that needs to be duplicated and stored offsite in the case of an emergency or disaster. The information in question would be the most recent version of the record and would be necessary for the agency to continue its statutory function after a disaster. Examples of this are: the current list of unpaid taxes, current security passwords and protocols, current contracts and leases, recent deposit records, etc.

Local Government Original (Paper) Records Acquisition Policy

In accordance with O.C.G.A. § 45-13-46, the director of the Division of Archives and History hereby certifies that any record identified as "Permanent" is necessary to document the history, organization, functions, policies, decisions, or procedures of the agency or office. Such records must be placed for permanent preservation in the state archives when no longer in current use by the agency or office.

Once records have been transferred to the State Archives, they become the property of the Georgia Archives as the legal custodian of the state's historical record. These records may be viewed by the public and by the agency during the operating hours of the Archives, but may not be removed. Should an agency require copies of its records, the Archives will be happy to provide them.

A local government will have certain records that are denoted as permanent. Some of these records may also be eligible for transfer to the Georgia Archives under the following criteria:

- Any 18th century record
- Superior court records (pre-1877):

- Minute books: books containing copies of the accusation and disposition associated with each case
- Deeds: books containing instruments pertaining to ownership and transfer of ownership of real and personal property
- Mortgages: records of claims against real property
- Probate court records (pre-1877):
 - Minute books: books containing copies of the accusation and disposition associated with each case
 - Wills: wills of decedents
 - Marriages: records of marriages
 - Plats: books containing maps of property
- Records of other local agencies:

[The Archives may accept records from other local agencies upon request by the local official.](#)

Only records in original formats will be accepted. The Archives will accept other local government records created after 1878 on a case-by-case basis.

This policy will be reviewed periodically by the Archives to determine if revision is needed.

Contact Information

If you have questions about this schedule or about records management issues, please contact us.

Records and Information Management Services
 The Georgia Archives
 5800 Jonesboro Road
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 Fax: 678-364-3860
 Email: rims@sos.state.ga.us
 Web: www.GeorgiaArchives.org



Schedules

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How to Read the Schedules

The six columns in the schedules are:

RECORD TITLE	The common name of the records and the information contained therein. Record title may also include the designation “VR” identifying the record as a vital record for disaster recovery.									
DESCRIPTION	A brief summary of the records.									
RETENTION	The period of time the record or information must be kept. Retention periods are stated from the creation of the record (i.e., Retain for 5 years) or triggered by an event (i.e., Retain for 5 years after settlement of case).									
LEGAL CITATION	The specific Federal and/or State Code which stipulates the retention period. This information may not exist for certain records.									
RETENTION CLASSIFICATION	<table><tr><td>TRANSITORY</td><td>Information of a temporary nature that does not meet the requirements for longer retention prescribed by O.C.G.A. §50-18-94(1).</td></tr><tr><td>TEMPORARY-SHORT TERM</td><td>Information that needs to be retained less than fifteen years.</td></tr><tr><td>TEMPORARY-LONG TERM</td><td>Information that needs to be retained for fifteen years or longer, but which does not need to be retained permanently.</td></tr><tr><td>PERMANENT</td><td>Information that for legal, historical, fiscal, or administrative reasons needs to be retained forever.</td></tr></table>		TRANSITORY	Information of a temporary nature that does not meet the requirements for longer retention prescribed by O.C.G.A. §50-18-94(1).	TEMPORARY-SHORT TERM	Information that needs to be retained less than fifteen years.	TEMPORARY-LONG TERM	Information that needs to be retained for fifteen years or longer, but which does not need to be retained permanently.	PERMANENT	Information that for legal, historical, fiscal, or administrative reasons needs to be retained forever.
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PERMANENT	Information that for legal, historical, fiscal, or administrative reasons needs to be retained forever.									
SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS	Procedural instructions provided by the Georgia Archives to assist agencies in implementing retention classifications. These instructions may also denote vital records needed in the event of a disaster.									

These classifications can also serve as a guideline when selecting appropriate record formats (paper, film, electronic).



Common Schedules
